

# GREENWorks

## Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

A publication of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, Concord, NH (603) 271-3710

July 2015

### ***Air Conditioners and Efficiency: They CAN Work Together!***



July in New Hampshire is definitely the “dog days of summer;” the days are long, the weather is hot, and the air is humid. To help survive the summer season, many of us rely on air conditioning units that although keep us comfortable in our homes, are not cheap to run and have had a bad reputation in the environmental field. Thankfully, air conditioner clunkers can be a thing of the past. New energy-efficient AC technology, when combined with easy energy efficiency tips, can help homeowners reduce the use of their air conditioner and the size of their energy bill.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, two-thirds of American homes have air conditioners. Of the U.S. homes with AC units, an average of 6% of the household’s energy use goes towards cooling the home, leading to a whopping \$11 billion a year spent just on air conditioning. Fortunately, new energy efficient AC models can reduce energy use by 20 to 50%, helping both the environment and our wallets!

However, purchasing a new AC unit can be pricy. So, if you are not ready to purchase a new air conditioner at this time, annual maintenance of your AC unit through three simple steps can promote energy efficiency:

1. Regularly clean or replace your cooling unit’s filters. Replacing the filters can decrease energy consumption by 5 to 15%, making it an easy way to improve the efficiency of your air conditioner.
2. Check and clean your air conditioners evaporator coil, coil fins, drain channels and the condenser and compressor (by cleaning out any leaves or other debris).
3. Have your air conditioning unit regularly maintained by a professional to prolong the units’ life and efficiency.



Although it may be easy to leave all the work of cooling your home to your air conditioning unit, you can also assist your air conditioner by trying the following practices in your daily home routine:

- **Morning:** Close your windows so that when the air conditioner is on, the cool air is kept indoors. Also, close any blinds, shades or drapes in south-facing windows to keep the Sun's heat out.
- **Dinner Time:** Consider using an outdoor grill on particularly warm days instead of the oven, and if you need to use the stove, be sure to use your vent fan to pull out as much heat as possible.
- **Nighttime:** Open your windows and shut off the AC to let the cooler summer night air into your home. If you are still feeling a little warm, try turning on a fan before changing the thermostat. Fans can decrease the temperature in a room by 4 degrees.

If you want to be extra energy efficient when cooling your home, there are other ways to lessen the work on your air conditioning unit if you are willing to purchase a few items. One item to consider buying is energy efficient window panels that let light in but keep solar heat out. You could also install window shades, drapes or blinds to reflect heat away from the house. Another method to assist your air conditioner in cooling your home is to insulate your attic walls and ensure that your air ducts are insulated and sealed. This can reduce energy consumption by up to 30%.

Air conditioners and energy efficiency can go together! With just a few home projects and a little change in your daily routine, homeowners can decrease their energy use, help the environment and help their wallets. For more information on how to promote energy efficiency with your air conditioner, explanations on the different types of air conditioners, air conditioner trouble shooting and more, visit the *EPA Energy Saver 101: Everything You Need to Know About Home Cooling* infographic at <http://www.energy.gov/articles/energy-saver-101-infographic-home-cooling>.

# # #